



## ANNUAL COUNCIL AND ADMINISTRATION WORKSHOP SATURDAY, MARCH 5, 2011

Roll Call:        Scott Pelot  
                     Mike Zita  
                     Ken Braman  
                     Brenda Hlas  
                     Todd Bergstrom  
                     Don Nicolard  
                     Bill Mowery-Absent

Also Present: Rick Ryland  
                     John Moss  
                     Ann Campbell  
                     Karla Richards

Additional Attendees: Norton Business Development Task Force Members; Dan Karant, George Arsic, Chris Williams. Charter Review Commission Members; Gayle Brenner, Mary Ann Driscoll, Ron Clawson, Ron Schaffer.

Norton City Council and Administration gathered for the Annual Council and Administration Workshop on Saturday, March 5, 2011 at approximately 9:00 AM in the Council Chambers of the Safety Administration Building.

### **Mr. Pelot-Council President-Opening remarks:**

Mr. Pelot welcomed everyone to the fifth Annual Council and Administration Workshop, and also thanked Ann Campbell and Karla Richards for the meal provided. Mr. Pelot stated that the whole concept of this Annual Workshop is to promote ideas for the best growth and overall. Mr. Pelot stated that Mayor Koontz started the Norton Business Development Task Force (NBDTF) and we need to continue with their efforts. They look at short-term goals that are attainable for the city and then work at extending them long term.

### **Discussion/Presentation-Norton Business Development Task Force:**

Mr. Dan Karant of the NBDTF stated our group was formed in April of 2008 and named the advisors that have been involved; Mayor Koontz, Jeff Pritchard, Rick Ryland, and John Moss from our City, Wayne Wiethe, Director of Planning-City of Green; Gregg Cramer-Greater Akron Chamber of Commerce; Chris Burnham-Summit County Port Authority; Dennis Clough-Mayor of Westlake; Chuck Wiedie, Director of Planning-City of Hudson; Connie Krauss, Director of Community & Economic development-Summit County; Scott Wagner, Deputy Development Director-Summit County; and Marty Oppenheimer-SCORE. Mr. Karant read to everyone the Mission Statement from the NBDTF, (see attached).

Mr. Karant stated that we need to focus on changing the basic thinking of some of the residents and their negative thoughts and comments. We are not asking for money here, we are looking to obtain a business driven web site maintained by the members and printed literature like a brochure to hand out to new businesses and residents, like a city map. Mr. Karant noted that the last city map was done in 1999 and we are completely out of them. We need the tools to offer and attract new businesses. Infrastructure needs to be here and ready for us to be able to promote more businesses. Mr. Karant stated that a stronger school system means the stronger the city can become. We need comprehensive zoning that makes sense and that over time zoning needs to morph into the future needs and changes for the city.

## **Discussion/Presentation-Norton Business Development Task Force Continued:**

Mr. Karant stated that grant writing is key, we need a dedicated person on board for this, either by a commission or a resident that can volunteer to do this part time. Other communities like Doylestown even have an Economic Developer on staff. Our city image is very dear to us to be able to project and promote to the community as a whole. Mr. Karant stated that some businesses have left our city because we were not able to address their questions, issues or concerns. Mr. Karant expounded on the web site idea and that they estimate it would cost \$1500.00 to get this set up and running. Mr. Karant suggested the local businesses could buy into it for a small fee up front or an annual fee and the NBDTF would have sole editing rights in order to keep it professional. Mr. Karant discussed the local map idea and the last count we have 142 local businesses. We would list their locations, their web site info if they have on, etc. We need to promote “Buy Norton-Be Norton” within our own city to keep people and revenue here in Norton, not somewhere else. Mr. Ryland commented on having a marketing promotions/grant writer on staff in the near future. Mr. Pelot questioned if this person should be on city staff or part of the NBDTF? Mr. Ryland replied that they need to be a city link and serve as a liaison to the NBDTF. Mr. Bergstrom stated that we really need both but can't afford it. If we don't do it right and reinvest it all just goes down the drain. Mr. Nicolard stated that everything needs to be done in the proper order to be effective, the brochure needs to come first, then the web site. Mr. Karant stated the idea is a full size folder with inner pockets on both sides where you can slip in all of the relevant Norton information. Mr. Ryland stated we also need a lobbyist to go to Washington for us and knock on their doors one a month or once a quarter. Mrs. Hlas stated the perception out there is that we are still looked at as a township, not a city. Ms. Brenner cited the example of the Holiday Inn that never happened because the residents at the time were so against it. Now Wadsworth has it, somehow these roadblocks need to be prevented in the future. Mr. Karant discussed the widening of Cleveland-Massillon Road in the near future. Mr. Bergstrom discussed the Mayor of Avon and the vision he had of getting his sewer project in his city. He made it happen and now they have a minor league baseball field. You just can't lose when you have such a big investment, you will watch it happen, don't be afraid. Mr. Ryland stated that you need to be very careful when selecting your big box retailers for the city. Mr. Karant agreed, adding that with Green, they had big time money with global investors at the ready. They had Aqua Ohio come in and supported their city with infrastructure. Mr. Williams stated it fit their city and it fit their needs. Mr. Williams stated that as a developer looking to come to a community, they first look to see what will benefit them in that community, do they want to invest there? Is there a tax abatement for an incentive for them, if it's good for the businesses to come here it will be good for the residents to have them here. Mr. Williams stated that we are already top heavy on residents here, they really don't bring in much revenue, it's the businesses that really contribute and we need to focus more on them. Mr. Karant stated the City of Green was very successful in obtaining grants that paid for their parks, public restrooms, etc, all with other funds, not the city's resources. Mr. Karant stated that since we have moved the Cider Festival to Columbia Woods Park, we need to keep improving our parks. Mr. Karant stated that the CIC and the Barberton Community Development Corporation could offer low interest loans to Norton businesses that want to get started here. Mr. Karant discussed the old fire station lot and that this needs to be marketed, it's just sitting there empty. Mr. Williams briefly discussed the Master Plan and that he felt it was heavily influenced by the residents, and that's a real problem. This is the right Administration, Mayor and Council that needs to update that plan. Norton missed the last economic bubble because we were not properly prepared; we cannot let that happen to us again.

### **Discussion/Presentation-Norton Business Development Task Force Continued:**

Mr. Williams stated No business is going to want to come here and put the burden upon themselves with putting in their own sewer and water, it should already be in place. We need to look at what can we offer the businesses that is different that what Barberton, Wadsworth, Montrose have, in order to get them to come here. Location is #1, we have so much access to the major highways and our utilities are on the way. Do we want Norton to be the next medical corridor in Summit County? Mr. Karant stated that the NBDTF will continue after Mayor Koontz's term and we will push the Buy Norton –Be Norton theme as much as possible. They will go out to the businesses and promote them with ribbon cuttings, and such. Mr. Karant mentioned Chuck Wiedie, Director of Economic Development for Hudson and that he is a real mover and a shaker. He goes out to the businesses once a week for visits, and asks businesses how can the city help them, etc. Mr. Williams stated that the Newpark Drive area is really your business tax base here in Norton and you really need to be helpful to us when we have issues, you need to listen to us and hear what we have to say and be aware of our needs. Mr. Clawson stated that it all sounds like you have the plans in place but no plans to execute them. You need to follow the SWOT approach, S-Strengths, W-Weaknesses, O-Opportunities, T-Threats approach. Mr. Ryland agreed adding that Council needs to take the biggest first step by deciding the direction to take with control of our own sewer and water. Mr. Pelot asked the members of the NBDTF what could Council do better to help them? Mr. Arsic discussed his experience in the past in Africa with the US Trade & Development and how they helped. In his corporate industry you have to stay close to the market to know what is going on. Mr. Arsic cautioned everyone to be prepared for barrier entries from other communities. Mr. Karant stated one thing Council could do is develop utilities closest to the main highways as being key, if you do that then they will build here. Mr. Karant said it has been stated by planning directors in other communities that our area of the county is the biggest undeveloped, its our history that has turned businesses away. Mr. Karant suggested networking with other community developers; they are tremendous assets to us. Mr. Karant also suggested having the residents appeal to their Council representatives more instead of using the open microphone to air the negative comments, because that's what gets printed in the papers. Mr. Karant also discussed the zoning issues with business signs; some temporary signs have been up for over 15 years. Mr. Williams suggested to keep us involved and keep asking for our input on issues, communication is key. Mr. Pelot asked the Council members what they would like to see from the NBDTF members? Mr. Bergstrom replied he would like a listing by wards of the current businesses that we do have, so that he could knock on doors and visit them. Ms. Brenner stated that some people in Norton have the misconception that more business will bring their property values down. Ms. Brenner stated the potential casino money could help with school programs and even purchase the property on Medina Line Road. Ms. Brenner discussed the need for a bigger and better community center. Mr. Pelot stated if the NBDTF knows of any business that is having an issued and not getting the help they need, he encouraged them to contact anyone on Council for assistance. Mr. Pelot stated he would like to see the NBDTF come to a Regular Council Meeting once a quarter or every six (6) months and give a brief report. Mr. Karant stated it's a given we do a poor job of promoting our city and this would be a good way to start. Mr. Karant stated the Norton Kiwanis has considered replacing the current sign at Williams Park with a digital billboard in the future. It's expensive and need assistance from others like the schools, business donations, etc. If everyone chips in it can be done in a short amount of time.

**Discussion/Presentation-Norton Business Development Task Force Continued:**

Mr. Bergstrom suggested maybe a member or members of the NBDTF could attend future Planning Commission meetings if they are so inclined, as they are all open to the public. Mr. Braman mentioned a future event, a classic car cruise in on July 7, 2011 at Columbia Woods Park, in conjunction with our summer concert series the same evening.

**Discussion/Presentation-Charter Review Commission:**

Ms. Brenner stated the first meeting is March 9, 2011 at 7:00 PM here in Council Chambers. Mr. Clawson stated he is looking forward to the proper direction. Mr. Pelot stated this is your committee and whatever proposed amendments will have to go to Council and if approved by Council, then to the Board of Elections to be placed on the ballot for the voters to decide. Mr. Ryland gave his brief comments to the members of the Charter Review Commission that were present, offering suggestions on how to proceed smoothly, keep open public meetings, posting the agenda, minutes, setting their own rules and procedures for public involvement, etc. Ms. Campbell stated that she has circulated a memo from Mayor Koontz to each department asking for their feedback on suggested changes that might impact them. Ms. Campbell noted we need that feedback by March 8, 2011, prior to their first meeting.

**Adjourn:**

There being no further business to come before it, the Council and Administration Workshop adjourned at 12:00 PM

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Scott Pelot, President of Council

I, Karla Richards, CMC-Clerk of Council for the City of Norton, do hereby certify the foregoing minutes were approved at a Regular Council Meeting on Monday, March 14, 2010

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Karla Richards-CMC, Clerk of Council